



News Release

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Contact: Joe Rosato (916) 324-1576
California State Parks
OHMVR Division
jrosa@parks.ca.gov

Assembly Passes OHV Extension Bill Supported by Environmentalists, Off-Highway Enthusiasts, Law Enforcement Agencies

The California State Assembly passed a measure Monday (April 23) that would extend California's Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Program for four years while off-highway vehicle enthusiasts and environmental interests continue to meet to resolve conflicts.

California's OHV program was created 30 years ago and annually provides recreational opportunities for millions of Californians. The program is funded through registration fees on off-road vehicles and fuel taxes associated with off-road recreation.

The bill, AB 723 by Assemblyman Juan Vargas, is sponsored by the Davis Administration and has the support of off-highway enthusiasts, environmental organizations and law enforcement agencies. The legislation counts the following among its supporters:

The Sierra Club, California Wilderness Coalition, Planning and Conservation League, California Off-Road Vehicle Association, Inc., California Motorcycle Dealers Association, California Association of Four-Wheel Drive Clubs, Blue Ribbon Coalition, Inc., National Off-Highway Vehicle Conservation Council, Inc., California-Nevada Snowmobile Association, California League of Off-Road Voters, American Motorcyclist Association Districts 36, 37 and 38, American Motorcyclist Association National office, the Center for Sierra Nevada Conservation, Motorcycle Industry Council, Imperial County, California Police Activities League and the Coalition of Labor, Agriculture and Business of Imperial County.

"This measure is very important because it gives the Legislature, the Davis Administration and all those interested in off-highway recreation issues the opportunity to continue their ongoing dialogue on this increasingly controversial subject," said David L. Widell, deputy director of the Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division of California State Parks. "The straightforward, yet short-term extension of the program as captured in AB 723 allows the important stakeholders process to continue. In the end, this will provide the Legislature much more meaningful and objective information when the full reauthorization of the program ensues."

“Mr. Vargas’ bill gives us time to see if recent reforms to the State’s off-road vehicle program will reduce vehicle damage and user conflicts on our National Forests and Bureau of Land Management lands,” said Karen Schambach, president of the Center for Sierra Nevada Conservation and a member of the Stakeholders Roundtable. “If the reforms show on-the-ground benefits, we’ll look forward to making them permanent; if environmental damage and displacement of non-motorized users continue, the extension allows us to work with other Stakeholders to try to find solutions.”

Paul Slavik of the American Honda Motor Co., also a member of the Stakeholders Roundtable, said: “As a concerned California resident and a member of the California OHV Stakeholders group, I know the importance of a successful OHV program. The extension of the sunset gives the group time to consider the best possible course for the future of the program.”

Support for the bill is reflective of the membership of the Stakeholders Roundtable, an advisory group to the OHMVR Commission and the Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division of California State Parks. The Stakeholders Roundtable was convened in May 2000 at the direction of State Parks Director Rusty Areias and has been meeting monthly. Stakeholders agreed unanimously to support the bill at their February meeting and also agreed to abstain from offering independent amendments to the legislation without concurrence from other stakeholders.

The bill would extend the program from January 2003 to January 2007. Many program authorization acts contain sunset clauses to ensure that programs are periodically reviewed. That is the Legislature’s way of determining whether a program should be continued, modified or eliminated. California State Park’s OHV program has been reviewed and reauthorized since 1982, when the OHV Commission was created. The OHV program’s sunset was extended in 1995 until January 1, 2003.

It is intended that recommendations from the OHV Stakeholders Roundtable will subsequently be incorporated into a new OHV program for California that will be more reflective of a State and a population that is markedly different from that which existed when the program was created in 1971.

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